

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows. This listing of claims is to replace all prior versions of the claims.

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1. [AMENDED] A method for detecting a ~~de-myelinating disease~~ multiple sclerosis, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals which comprises testing a biological sample obtained from the mammal for IgA antibodies which bind to an *Acinetobacter* antigen species.

2. A method according to claim 1, in which the *Acinetobacter* is one which presents to the mammal an antigen which exhibits molecular mimicry with the myelin of the mammal.

- C4
3. [AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies are indicative of prior ~~infection by~~ exposure to *Acinetobacter calcoaceticus*.

4. [AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to an epitope antigen present in or derived from the *Acinetobacter* species or to a prepared peptide sequence corresponding thereto.

5. [PREVIOUSLY-AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

6. [PREVIOUSLY-AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is multiple sclerosis in humans.

7. [PREVIOUSLY-AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in humans.

8. A method according to claim 1, in which antibodies are assayed and a positive result is indicated by levels of antibodies at least about two standard deviations above that of control samples.

9. **[TWICE-AMENDED]** A test kit for use ~~with a method according to claim 1~~ detecting multiple sclerosis, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals, the test kit comprising a test antigen, and wherein in which the test antigen is the whole *Acinetobacter* organism or at least one prepared peptide sequence corresponding to an *Acinetobacter* epitope antigen, said the test kit including a secondary antibody against the human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.
10. **[TWICE-AMENDED]** A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to a peptide sequence that has sufficient conformational similarity to an *Acinetobacter* epitope antigen such that the antibodies tested for are cross-reactive with the *Acinetobacter* epitope antigen.
- 25 11. **[TWICE-AMENDED]** A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope is antigen contains the peptide sequence ISRFAWGEV (SEQ. ID. NO: 2).
12. **[TWICE-AMENDED]** A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope antigen contains the peptide sequence RFSAWGAE (SEQ. ID. NO: 1).
13. **[TWICE-AMENDED]** A test kit for use ~~with a method according to claim 10, in which the~~ detecting multiple sclerosis, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals, the test kit comprising a test antigen, and wherein the test antigen is a peptide sequence which is conformationally sufficiently similar to an *Acinetobacter* epitope antigen to bind to antibodies that bind to the *Acinetobacter* epitope antigen, said the test kit including a secondary antibody against human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.
14. **[PREVIOUSLY-AMENDED]** A test kit according to claim 13, comprising a peptide having the sequence RFSAWGAE (SEQ. ID. NO: 1) or ISRFAWGEV (SEQ. ID. NO: 2).

15. A test kit according to claim 9, in which the secondary antibody is a rabbit anti-human IgA or rabbit anti-bovine IgA.
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16. [NEW] A method according to Claim 2, in which the antigen is a peptide containing the sequence ISRFAWGEV (SEQ. ID. NO: 2).

17. [NEW] A method according to claim 1, in which antibodies are assayed and a positive result is indicated by levels of antibodies significantly higher than that of control samples.

18. [NEW] A test kit for detecting multiple sclerosis, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals, the test kit comprising:

a test antigen specific for antibodies to an *Acinetobacter* species, wherein the *Acinetobacter* species contains an antigen which exhibits molecular mimicry with myelin of the mammal; and

an antibody that specifically reacts with IgA components of the antibodies to an *Acinetobacter* species.
